

THE LATER MINISTRY OF JOHN CRAIG AT ST. GILES', 1567 - 1572

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THE problems confronting John Craig in his ministry at St. Giles' up until the end of 1566, were easy compared with those which were to follow. The Diurnal of Occurrents records that "Upon the ninth day of the said month of May (1567) our Sovereign lady and the Earl of Bothwell were proclaimed in the college kirk of St Giles to be married together." This proclamation of royal marriage banns, coming with such unseemly haste after the murder of the Queen's husband, must have been grimly heard by the assembled congregation. Kirkcaldy of Grange, in a letter to the Earl of Bedford, written on the 26th of the previous month, had communicated the following bit of scandal:

"The Queen will never cease till she has wrecked all the honest men of this realm. She wished Bothwell to ravish her, so that end his marriage sooner, which she promised before she brought about the death of her husband."¹

Thus did Kirkcaldy express himself, though perhaps not in the best way, but his meaning is quite clear. On May 7, Robert Melville wrote Cecil:

"Bothwell has brought the Queen to Edinburgh, and required Master John Craig to proclaim their banns of marriage, which he refused to do, answering that he (Bothwell) might not be her lawful husband."²

When the General Assembly met on Christmas day, 1567, John Row of Perth being Moderator, Craig, at one of their sederunts and at their request, presented in writing his proceedings touching the proclamation of the banns of Mary and Bothwell. His submission was as follows:

"To the end that all that fear God may understand my proceedings in this matter, I shall shortly declare what I did, and what moved me to defend the same, leaving the final judgment of all things to the Kirk. First, being required of Mr. Thomas Hepburn, in the Queen's name, to proclaim her with the Lord Bothwell, I plainly refused, because he hadn't her handwrite; and also, because of the constant

¹ *Calendar of State Papers (Scottish Series)*, Vol. III, p. 325.

² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

rumour that the lord had ravished her and kept her in captivity. Upon Wednesday following, the Justice-Clerk (Sir John Bellenden) brought me a document signed by her hand, bearing in effect, that she was neither ravished nor yet detained in captivity, and therefore charged me to proclaim. My answer was, I durst proclaim no banns (and chiefly such) without the consent and command of the kirk. Upon Thursday following, after long reasoning with the Justice-Clerk, and amongst the brethern, at length concluded, that the Queen's mind should be published to her subjects, the next three preaching days. But because the General Assembly had inhibited all such marriages, we protested, that we would neither solemnize nor yet approve that marriage, but would only declare the princess's mind, leaving all doubts and dangers to the counsellors, approvers, and prescribers of the marriage. And so, upon Friday following, I declared the whole mind and progress of the kirk, desiring every man, in God's name, to discharge his conscience before the Secret Council. And to give boldness to others, I desired of the lords there present, time and place to speak my judgment before the parties; protesting, if I were not heard and satisfied, I either would desist from proclaiming, or else declare my mind publicly before the whole kirk. Therefore, being admitted after noon before my lord (Bothwell) and the council, I laid to his charge the law of adultery, the ordinance of the Kirk, the law of ravishing, the suspicion of collusion betwixt him and his wife, the sudden divorce and proclaiming within the space of four days, and last, the suspicion of the King's death, which his marriage would confirm. But he answered nothing to my satisfaction. Whereupon, after many exhortations, I protested, that I could not but declare my mind publicly to the kirk. Therefore, upon Sunday, after I had declared what they had done, and how they would proceed whether we would or not, I took heaven and earth to witness that I abhorred and detested that marriage, because it was odious and slanderous to the world. And seeing the best part of the realm did approve it, either by flattery or by their silence, I desired the faithful to pray earnestly, that God would turn to the comfort of this realm, that thing then intended against reason and good conscience. And because I heard some persons grudge against me, I used their reasons for my defence:—First, I had broken no law, by proclaiming of their persons at their request. Secondly, if their marriage was slanderous, I did well, forewarning all men of it in time. Thirdly, as I had of duty declared to them the princess's will, so did I faithfully teach them, by word and example, what God craved of them. But upon Tuesday following, I was called before the Council, and accused, that I had

passed the bounds of my commission, calling the marriage of the princess odious and slanderous before the world. I answered, 'The bounds of my commission, which were the Word of God, good laws, and natural reason, were able to prove whatsoever I spake; yea, that their own conscience could not but bear witness, that such a marriage would be odious and slanderous to all that should hear it, if all the circumstances were rightly considered.' But while I was coming to my probation, my lord (Bothwell) put me to silence, and sent me away. And so, upon Wednesday, I first repeated and satisfied all things spoken, and afterwards exhorted the brethern not to accuse me, if that marriage proceeded, but rather themselves, who would not, for fear, oppose themselves, but rather sharpened their tongues against me, because I admonished them of their duty, and suffered not the cankered conscience of hypocrites to sleep at rest; protesting at all times to them, that it was not my proclaiming, but their silence, that gave any lawfulness to that marriage: for as the proclaiming did take all excuse from them, so my private and public condemnation (of the marriage) did save my conscience sufficiently. And this far I proceeded in this marriage, as the kirk of Edinburgh, lords, earls and barons, will bear me witness.

"Now, seeing I have been shamefully slandered both in England and Scotland, by wrong information, and false report of them that hated my ministry, I desire, first, the judgment of the Kirk; and next, the same to be published, that all men may understand whether I be worthy of such a report or not."¹

This carefully prepared statement of Craig's was favourably received by the General Assembly. That a commission of Assembly carefully studied the facts which Craig supplied, making at the same time their own investigations, is evident; for it was not until the General Assembly of the 6th July, 1569, that they formally deliberated on the affair. They then declared with one voice that

"The said defence (of Master John Craig) being privately and publicly read, the whole points therein contained by the whole Assembly maturely considered; it was found by the brethren, that he had done the duty of a faithful minister, and had committed nothing slanderous to such as have righteous judgment, in respect of the aforesaid defence, which was found both godly and sufficient for declaration of his innocence which the whole Assembly declared, testified and ordained the same to be notified to all and sundry."²

¹ Calderwood, Vol. II, pp. 394-396.

² B. U. K., p. 144.

Row the historian, whose father was Moderator of the 1567 General Assembly when this matter was first raised, and who was present when they convened during July, 1569, notes that "Mr. John Craig is judged to have done honestly in that matter anent proclaiming the banns betwixt the Queen and the Earl of Bothwell."¹

Spottiswoode gives in detail, Craig's actions during these testing weeks, and it is obvious that he accepted Craig's version of what had happened.² Spottiswoode says that it was really the office of John Cairns, the reader, to proclaim banns of marriage, but that with regard to those of Mary and Bothwell, he "did simply refuse," throwing thus the responsibility for their proclamation on Craig. The Assembly upheld Craig's contention that he had acted within his rights: "I have broken no law." Knox was convinced that his colleague had followed the proper course. He wrote:

"Notwithstanding all this done and said by Master Craig, and the opposition of many that wished well to the Queen, and were jealous of her honour, the marriage went on . . . And a bishop must bless the marriage. The good Prelate was Bishop of Orkney (Adam Bothwell). If there is a good work to be done, a bishop must do it. Here mark the difference betwixt this worthy minister, and this base bishop."³

Strong language, but surely no churchman worthy of the name could have applauded Adam Bothwell for consenting to be celebrant.

It is beyond all shadow of doubt that, Craig, throughout all the unhappy proceedings of the marriage, never once tried to accommodate Mary and Bothwell. He even followed the risky course of playing for time in the hope that better counsels would obtain, but his efforts were of no avail. Bishop Keith considered that it was "after abundance of reluctance" that Craig read the banns, and the Romanist historian Bellesheim gave it as his opinion that Craig showed "unmistakable expression of his own sentiments as to the ill-omened union."⁴ The veracity of Craig's own testimony to the General Assembly is reflected in a letter of 11th May, 1567, which Drury the English ambassador sent Cecil and which reads:

"He (Craig) signified that it was directly against his conscience to ask them (the banns), as he considered the marriage altogether unlawful. He asked all to leave from setting up papers and secret whisperings, and to let them who had ought to say, say it openly."⁵

¹ *Op.cit.*, p. 40.

² Spottiswoode's *History*, Vol. II, p. 52 *et seq.*

³ *Knox's Works*—Dickinson, Vol. II, p. 207.

⁴ *Church and State*—Keith, Vol. I, p. 494. *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*—Bellesheim, Vol. III, p. 130 *et seq.*

⁵ *State Papers, Foreign Series* (Elizabeth), 1566-68, p. 230.

There remains to consider another letter of 16th May, 1567, in which Drury affirms that the marriage was "with a sermon and not with a Mass . . . The Bishop of Orkney and Mr. Craig were present and had to do." The Diurnal says much the same thing, and adding that the ceremony took place within the "auld chappell . . . at ten hours afore noon," but it makes no mention of Craig being present.¹ It seems odd that, if he shared in the ceremony, he made no mention of this in his written statement to the Church's supreme Court. There is no record whatsoever that they ever laid such a charge against him. Such was certainly rumoured, for he wrote that he had been "shamefully slandered in England and Scotland, by wrong information and false report . . ." Wodrow informs us that John Cairns was present at the marriage, in his capacity as reader.² If so, it could have been with Drury, a case of mistaken identity. With Craig and the Queen, it is obvious that it was a battle of wills. The more determined he was in his resistance to the marriage, the more vicious was her paramour's conduct towards him. Wrote Drury to Cecil on 14th May:

"The banns were upon Sunday last asked by Mr. Craig in St. Giles church, who spared not in the pulpit to manifest his unwillingness for which the Earl (of Bothwell) says he will provide him a cord."³

Craig was no craven, and it is therefore most unlikely that after this lawless threat on his life, he should have consented, even under duress, to share in the marriage ceremony. In any case, it was unnecessary for the Bishop of Orkney, Bothwell's namesake, no relative though a friend in need, was only too willing to act. In the midst of sensational events, the General Assembly met on the 25th June, 1567; for eight days previously, Queen Mary had been imprisoned in Lochleven castle and Bothwell was in flight. George Buchanan, who was to become her son's tutor, was the layman Moderator of this Assembly whose deliberations John Craig opened with prayer. Knox was present; he had lost little time in returning from his long sojourn in England. But several of the leading Protestant lords absented themselves, their sympathies being with the captured Sovereign. In the hope that these lords would be won over to their side, the Assembly arranged to meet once more, namely, on 26th July. They gave commission to Knox, Craig and several others to meet these abstaining nobles and make every effort to gain their support.⁴ The reason for this personal approach was because some of the Reformation's lay leaders

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

² *Wodrow Selections*—Lippe, p. 15.

³ *State Papers, Foreign Series* (Elizabeth), Vol. VIII, p. 230.

⁴ *John Knox*—Hume Brown, Vol. II, p. 242. Row p. 33. Calderwood, Vol. II p. 370.

had ignored a letter sent to them by the General Assembly on the 26th of June, and signed by six clerical Johns, Knox, Row, Craig, Erskine of Dun, Spottiswoode and Douglas.

Queen Elizabeth had no wish to see her cousin harmed, and so her ambassador Throckmorton was instructed to interview the principal Reformers without delay. His letter to Elizabeth, dated 18th July, 1567, includes the following:

“Mr. Knox arrived here in this town (Edinburgh) the 17th of this month. (He had been away from the capital to supplicate the support of the West), with whom I have had some conference; and with Mr. Craig also, the other minister of this town. I have persuaded them to preach and persuade leniently. I find them very austere in this conference . . . They are furnished with many arguments, some forth of the Scriptures, some forth of histories, some upon practices used in this realm . . .”¹

Knox had been clamouring for Mary's death, but with Craig at his elbow, moderate counsels did not pass unheeded.²

When the General Assembly met during July, we learn that “Thanks was given to God by Mr. John Craig, minister, Edinburgh.”³ His prestige in the affairs of the Reformed Church was now very great, and, there is no doubt that Knox's mantle of leadership would in due course have fallen to him, had Craig not blotted his escutcheon—that is, in the estimate of his colleague and other principal Reformers—by the part he played during the civil war of 1570-72 which followed upon the assassination of the Regent Moray. At the July Assembly, few indeed of the higher nobility were present—nine in fact—which shows that but meagre success had attended the labours of Knox, Craig and others to gain their support. Nothing discouraged, the General Assembly resolutely forged ahead with their programme of reconstruction.⁴ They found Queen Mary to have forfeited the crown, and that a temporary authority should be set up in the name of her son. The Acts of 1560 establishing the new religion were confirmed, with the pledge on part of the lords present that, at the next meeting of the Estates, the civil power should review its assent to all the laws that had been passed in favour of the ministers and the poor.⁵ This remarkable General Assembly was virtually in the position of being, if only for a few weeks, the government of Scotland.

¹ *Knox's Works*—Laing, Vol. VI, p. 553.

² *John Knox*—Percy, p. 409.

³ *B. U. K.*, p. 100.

⁴ *John Knox*—Hume Brown, Vol. II, p. 244.

⁵ *Ibid.*

With Moray now back again in Scotland (11th of August, and appointed Regent on the 22nd), the tide was in full flood for the cause of the Reformers. At a meeting of the new Privy Council, a committee was formed of certain noblemen, civic chiefs and ministers, to prepare overtures for the session of Parliament which was convened for December, and among the number of the clergy were "Master John Spottiswoode, Master John Craig, John Knox, Master John Row and Master David Lindsay."¹ The deliberate omission here of "Master" before Knox's name in this official document would seem to indicate that he was not a graduate.

Craig's financial position which, hitherto had not been really stabilised, became the intimate concern of the Town Council. Queen Mary at her castle interview with Spottiswoode and Craig during the summer of 1566, had promised financial help for all the ministers, and so far as Craig was concerned, we note that by March 12th, 1567, certain annuals (yearly rents), presumably from Church endowments of one kind or another, had been given by her specifically for the benefit of Edinburgh incumbents.² To ensure that these emoluments were received, the Queen demanded the signatures of the beneficiaries. This royal liberality was probably well-intentioned but, when it is recalled that she had by now resolved to marry Bothwell, it could be that her grant was in the nature of a sop or a subtle bribe. Apart from this crown grant to Craig and the others, the Town Council still considered that their ministers were underpaid; so they arranged during that autumn to institute a tax for their sustenance.³ Their Council Minute of the 11th September states that Craig was consulted as to how the annuals from such sources as Church lands, farms, houses, cottages, orchards, chapels and so forth, could best be ingathered by their burgess Michael Chisholm, "collector general."⁴ From this same Minute we learn that formerly the benefits coming from these had appertained to "priests, monks, friars, canons, nuns and others of that order." These temporalities were now to be applied for the "utility and profit of ministers, the ministry, the poor and the hospitals."⁵ The fruits of Moray's regency had begun to ripen fast on behalf of the Kirk.

Ten days after the first parliament of the regency assembled, the General Assembly met in Edinburgh on Christmas day, and for the third successive occasion John Craig made "the invocation of God's name."⁶ As has been noted, they dealt with him concerning his behaviour at the time of Mary's marriage. They confirmed the appointment of Knox, Craig and the other ministers to serve on the government committee of

¹ *Acts of Parliament of Scotland*, Vol. III, p. 25.

² *B.R.E.* 1557-71.

³ *Ibid.* p. 239.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 240.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 241.

⁶ *B. U. K.*, p. 112.

which mention has been made. Early in the new year 1567-8, Craig, George Buchanan and several other clergy proceeded to Cupar as commissioners sent from this Assembly. They met in conference with the ministers, elders and deacons of the Fife Synod who made complaints against the conduct of their Superintendent, John Winram. Also around this time, Row, Craig and a few others were engaged at the Assembly's command in revising the "Form and order of excommunication" which Knox had penned (*Vide* his 1564 Liturgy), and which was thought to require simplification.¹ These labours were approved at the General Assembly of July, 1568, where it was decided that for the future, excommunication was to be the function of the minister and kirk session, it to be carried out by superintendents only if and where there was no reformed congregation. The Reformed Church owes a great debt to the superintendents, but they had at times to be reminded who really held the reins.

The General Assembly of 1st March, 1570, met in Edinburgh under the grievous shadow of the Regent Moray's murder. It was under no auspicious circumstances, therefore, that John Craig, with "ane voice," was elected Moderator—a position which he was in all to fill thrice over. The hour demanded a strong man, and Craig was the obvious choice. Little is known of his activities between 1568 and 1570, but that he was unanimously elected at a critical time to lead the Kirk proves that he had been steadily pursuing, and with growing acceptance, his vocation. This Assembly is noteworthy for instituting that retiring Moderators should give the exhortation, after which "the Assembly shall proceed to the choosing of a new Moderator," and this practice continues.² They met again during June when "the exhortation and prayer was made by Mr. John Craig."³ To him, then, belongs the distinction of being first among the galaxy of notable churchmen who have performed this service. By way of commentary Row says that:

"A new Moderator . . . when he demitted his place at the opening or entry of the ensuing Assembly . . . taught a sermon, to stir up his brethren to their duties in their stations and calling, and relating to the times and present exigencies."⁴

Craig proved to be one of the outstanding leaders of the General Assembly of the sixteenth century. Of different form from that of present times, it then was in composition, not unlike the Three Estates of the Realm. Men like Craig were chosen to lead because of their strength of character, and because, like him, of their expert knowledge of civil and canon law. During Craig's thirty-nine years of ordained service in the

¹ Calderwood, Vol. II, p. 424.

² *Ibid.* p. 529.

³ *B. U. K.*, p. 175.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

Reformed Kirk, he was invariably in attendance at their General Assemblies, taking a leading part in most of the important committees until a late hour of his long life. Principal Lee considers that Craig's vast legal knowledge, as that of Pont and Arbuthnot, was of invaluable assistance in all matters affecting Church government and this fact succeeding Assemblies realised and came to value more and more.¹ And where the Church deemed any approach to the civil authorities to be necessary, Craig was almost certain to be among the number elected to prosecute such duties. Like Knox, he was as much a statesman as a cleric, though Craig's more moderate counsels were not always acceptable to the other Reformers. Throughout his career he pursued a steady course, being personally little affected by praise or blame, and if he made mistakes or on occasion suffered obloquy, whatever his immediate loss in prestige or in the confidence of the Church at large was, he quickly regained it through worthy endeavour, and a fine devotion to his vocation. No minister or Church layman in that testing century had ever any reason to complain that in attendance at, and in the multifarious work of, the General Assembly, Craig at any time failed to "report diligence." We learn though, that on one occasion he was, with John Duncanson, the King's senior chaplain, criticised for non-attendance at Synod. The Synod of Lothian complained to the General Assembly of October, 1582, who ordered that "notice be given to John Duncanson to take greater attendonce: and to write to Mr. Craig, as necessity shall be, for him to come."²

The civil war following upon the assassination of Moray did great damage to the Kirk and the Commonwealth, and helped to sow the seed of ecclesiastical divisions of the succeeding century. The two years internal struggle was bitter, and as a result the economy of Scotland, never vigorous, suffered considerable disruption, great hardships being experienced by most classes, particularly the poor. Craig's sympathies were with these last, and the Diurnal records the occasion when "The poor cried to the Regent (Lennox) and he would not hear them; at the same time this oppression was denounced by John Craig, minister."³ Andrew Lang considers that this refers to acts of lawlessness during November, 1571:

"When a famous retainer of Lennox, Thomas Crawford, was mercilessly despoiling the poor tenants of the Hamiltons. The preacher Craig, a just and courageous man, induced Lennox to make some amends, but Crawford was still plundering."⁴

¹ *Church of Scotland*—Lee, Vol. I, p. 272.

² Calderwood, Vol. III, p. 746.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁴ *History of Scotland*—Lang, Vol. II, p. 233.

Though the Hamiltons were the slayers of the Regent Moray and had taken the Queen's side in the present struggle, it was characteristic of Craig to put his religious principles before ought else, including factions.

Around this time, Knox became the special object of antipathy to the Queen's Party, and he went about daily in grave danger. Craig's manservant, being met one day by a reconnoitering party, and asked who his master was, answered in his trepidation, Mr. Knox; upon which he was seized, and although he immediately corrected his mistake, they desired him to "hold to his first master," and dragged him to prison.¹ During December, 1570, Kirkcaldy of Grange, onetime "pillar of the Kirk," who had gone over to the Queen's side, and was now holding in her name the Castle of Edinburgh, led a sortie which broke into the Tolbooth and rescued one of his men who had been imprisoned by the magistrates on a charge of murder. This lawless behaviour on the part of Kirkcaldy, his old friend and comrade in arms, made John Knox furious, and so on the Sunday following he waxed eloquent in St. Giles' against this terrible "example," and labelled him "wicked." The act could not be worse, Knox declaimed, since Kirkcaldy was a prominent member of the Reformed Kirk. The latter could be as irascible as Knox, and news of this pulpit attack reaching him immediately the service was over, in a great rage he wrote to Craig a letter which was handed him as he was about to begin the afternoon diet of worship. It read:

"This day, John Knox, in his sermon, called me a murderer and a throat-cutter, wherein he has spoken further than he is able to justify. For I take God to witness, if it was my mind that that man's blood should have been shed, of whom he called me a murderer. And the same God I desire from the bottom of my heart, to pour out his vengeance suddenly upon him and me, which of us two have been most desirous of innocent blood. This I desire you, in God's name, to declare openly to the people. At Edinburgh Castle, 24th December, 1570."²

Having read the letter, Craig bluntly told Kirkcaldy's servant to inform his master that he would read nothing of such a nature in St. Giles' without the consent of the kirk session.

As Hume Brown shows, the report of Knox's sermon had lost nothing of its offensiveness in its short passage from the kirk to the castle; for the words that cut Kirkcaldy to the quick, "a murderer and a throat-cutter,"

¹ *John Knox*—M'Crie (1885 edit.), p. 257 (quoting from the *Bannatyne Memorials*).

² *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 70 *et. seq.*

had been completely and doubtless, deliberately taken out of their context by someone who was obviously fishing in troubled waters. What the preacher had said was (and there is no reason to doubt the words),

“that, in all his days he never saw so slanderous, so fearful, and so tyrannical a fact. Had the perpetrator been a man without God, a throatcutter and a murderer . . . it wouldn't have moved me. But to see the stars fall from heaven, and a man of knowledge commit so manifest a treason what godly heart could not but lament . . .”¹

Knox had spoken more in sorrow than in anger. Craig in being cautious—a characteristic of his—when he had received the letter, “had acted wisely,” wrote his colleague.²

Although Craig by tactfully handling this somewhat Gilbertian incident had prevented the castle commander from committing more serious folly, the laird was by no means pacified. Ignoring Craig's rebuff, he directed his complaint to St. Giles' kirk session, in a letter dated 28th December, in which he endeavoured to justify his recent action and also vilify Knox. He went on to say that the other had a private grudge against him and had accused him of dreadful crimes to his “slander and ignominy . . . , but,” concluded he, “my conscience is clear as I have declared to John Craig.” When Craig read this letter to the kirk session, they resolved to stand loyally by Knox, and sent him a copy. It could be that this quarrel was simulated, merely “kite flying” by members of the Queen's Party in an effort to divide the two reformers, but if so, it failed miserably. The tactful yet firm handling of the situation by Craig and the kirk session bore fruit; for Kirkcaldy was forced to adopt a more conciliatory attitude. His castle “salvo” had misfired, and to Knox belonged the parting “shot”; for in another sermon he bade Superintendent Spottiswoode “to be faithful and stout in his office and admonish him (Kirkcaldy).”³

When the General Assembly convened in March, 1571, they were fully expecting Kirkcaldy to renew his attacks on Knox, but nothing was attempted beyond the writing and placing in public places of scurrilous libels. A strongly-worded letter from the West, signed by Glencairn and other influential persons, in defence of Knox, which Kirkcaldy had received in January, had doubtless moved the Queen's Party to caution. Yet there were a number of prominent members of this March Assembly, Craig among them, who now considered that Knox in his pulpit utterances was going too far. This dissent was soon evident; for when Richard Bannatyne wished them to support a public edict to the effect that they

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 70 *et. seq.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Calderwood*, Vol. III, p. 70 *et seq.*

approved Knox's doctrine, they refused. Bannatyne or Knox, possibly by way of reproach, gives the names of those who had urged him to remain silent meanwhile—which he refused to do—, and these included Erskine of Dun and John Craig.¹ We may date, therefore, from this time the "little rift within the lute," that was to end in Knox and Craig dissolving their joint ministry at St. Giles'. It is significant that when the break came, as it did during the following year, Craig according to Spottiswoode went first to Montrose which was under the supervision of Craig's friend, Erskine of Dun.

During the spring of 1571, Craig found himself in an extremely difficult position. He was now out of sympathy with Knox's continued vehement pulpit utterances. Though he counselled moderation, his colleague would have none of it, proceeding as formerly, so that his very presence in the Capital became fraught with suspense and danger to himself and others. Craig was for some form of conciliation, if not compromise, with the Queen's Party; but this proposed accommodation was quite repugnant to John Knox. In his opinion, it would merely serve to the advantage of those whom he believed were striving with all their power to undo the work of Reformation. Thus Knox continued to act as he pleased, and so did Craig. There were comings and goings betwixt him and the men defending the castle. For example, there is the significant Town Council Minute of the 28th April, the contents of which speak for themselves:

"The remaining bailies and council ordain (here follows a list of sixteen names including "Master Craig, minister") . . . to pass to the castle and desire the captain that all the King's lieges may resort to the town without trouble, and that he suffer not the inhabitants of this town to be molested by the men of war raised by him and the lords, and to report his answer,"²

Kirkcaldy's response was immediate, for the Town Council wrote to the Regent Lennox then at Stirling with regard to:

"the order taken betwixt the township (Edinburgh) and the captain (Kirkcaldy), namely, that he nor any of his shall trouble any of the inhabitants of this town . . ."³

A serious attempt was now made by the Queen's Party to win Craig over to their side. On the 6th May, the Duke of Chatelherault (Hamilton), who had lately arrived with his men to reinforce the castle, came to St. Giles' together with his son Claude and the Earl of Huntly, to hear Craig

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 95.

² *B.R.E.*, 1557-71.

³ *Ibid.*

preach, but left, we are told, "before prayers."¹ With the Duke now in Edinburgh, followed by Kirkcaldy's belligerent siege ultimatum to the townsmen, we learn that

"the brethren of the town seeing their minister (Knox) in danger, came unto him with Mr. John Craig, also being minister, and desired him, in the name of God, to depart."²

Knox was at last persuaded to leave, though most unwillingly, but ere he departed, he attended with Craig a conference in the castle between representatives of the warring parties, with the object of discussing their differences. Hume Brown has it that this meeting took place between the 5th of May—on which day Knox officially left Edinburgh—and the 8th of the month, the day on which Knox crossed the Forth.³ Since the 6th was the Sunday on which Craig was officiating at St. Giles', the conference probably took place during Monday 7th. Among the Reformers who accompanied Knox, were Craig, Spottiswoode, Winram and Erskine of Dun. Wodrow asserts that they were sent by the other principal Reformers, "to labour for an agreement betwixt the contending parties, and for preventing the effusion of christian blood."⁴ Of the Queen's supporters, present, the chief were Chatelherault, Sir James Balfour, Lethington and Kirkcaldy. Winram opened the discussion by expressing the hope that both parties would reach an amicable settlement. Knox made no comment on this, but he reminded the other side that they had requested the meeting, having written John Craig to this effect, and he (Knox) desired Lethington to guide them as to the lines along which they might proceed. The latter said bluntly that there could be no coming to terms, for the simple reason that they of the Queen's side were not in conference to parley with equals, but to dictate terms, since, said he, "the principals of the nobility of Scotland are here." To this Craig answered boldly that

"We have somewhat more to say, as it appears to me that, seeing there is a lawful authority established in the person of the King and his Regent throughout this realm, which ought to be obeyed by all the subjects thereof, therefore our duty is, as commissioners and members of the Kirk, to admonish every one of your lordships to obey the same."

Lethington replied that as for them, the King's authority was but "a fetch or a shift to save us from great inconveniences." They never intended that it should "stand and continue." The others nodded agreement. But Knox had his answer ready:

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 119.

² *Ibid*, p. 118.

³ *John Knox*—Hume Brown, Vol. II, pp. 263-4.

⁴ *Wodrow Selections*—Lippe, p. 14.

“My lord, I perceive that methinks God has beguiled you, that howbeit He has used you and your shifts as an instrument of the King’s authority, yet, it appears, He will not set it down again at your pleasure.”

Lethington’s heated reply was to enquire how they knew theirs was God’s counsel, for they would soon be taught the contrary. “Till then,” answered Knox courageously, “our argument holds good . . .” The discussion at this conference table became more and more heated till Lethington became abusive and brusquely said that the Reformers were but out for loot, all else being pretence. “Then,” was Craig’s retort, “let such things be spoken of them that be yonder (the Canongate), much worse is spoken of them that be here . . .” “And what is that, Mr. Craig?” asked Lethington. “My lord,” answered he, “it is plainly spoken that those that are here labour only in their proceedings to cloak cruel murderers, and that the consciences of some of you are so pricked with the same, that you will not suffer the nobility to agree,” The Secretary in answer said that if the Queen was re-established she would bring such criminals to justice. To which Craig replied: “How can these two stand, that the Queen being set in authority, who is guilty of the murder of the King, shall punish the murder in any others?” There was no reply. Then Craig went on to say that it was an extraordinary thing that some of their opponents present including the Duke, didn’t acknowledge the King’s authority, while others of them like Lethington, Balfour and Kirkcaldy had been “chief instruments in erecting the same.” The conference ended in failure; it was in a mood of frustration that all arose to depart: “Here we began to move, and as it were everyone to laugh upon the other . . .”¹ Their laughter was cynical rather than cordial. In a letter to the English Privy Council, dated 20th May, 1571, Drury sent the following report:

“The ministers and Superintendents of the country, taking with them the minister of Edinburgh, called John Craig, went to the castle, and there declared before the whole company of the nobility, that seeing the great desolation and ruin of the country like to ensue through the intestine wars began amongst the nobility, they were come to know what cause moved some of them there present who had been the principal doers in setting up the King’s Majesty, so violently to take in hand wars against him under his authority. The Secretary Balfour, and the captain of the castle answered that they were of necessity forced to do what they did, and farther said that they marvelled that they would take upon them to have anything to do with the government of the state which appertained nothing to them,

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, pp. 125-132.

and the ministers replied that they marvelled most that Grange having such trust committed unto him had left so good a cause."¹

Historians are not agreed as to whom the "Mr. John" of the conference was. Russell, author of "*Maitland of Lethington*," says that Spottiswoode was the man, whilst Wodrow gives him as Craig. Drury's letter seems to suggest that Craig occupied a key position there. Certainly he was being wooed vigorously at this time by the Queen's Party; hence the frequent deference to "Mr. John" by Lethington could be regarded as an attempt to flatter him. However, as has been noted already, Drury was not invariably correct about his facts concerning John Craig. Hill Burton seems to have been the first historian to assert categorically that the "Mr. John" was Knox himself, and Hume Brown is certain that this is correct. When "Mr. John" speaks, we have, in Hume Brown's judgment, the authentic voice of Knox, somewhat subdued perhaps (he was a very sick man), but nonetheless his. The writer agrees with this view. Knox's servant-secretary, Bannatyne, narrates the episode from the viewpoint of observer, which indicates that he also was present, doubtless in his capacity of attendant on his master.

Viewed in retrospect, this "summit" conference does seem to have served one useful purpose, namely to harden public opinion against the pretensions of the nobility to dictate the political, economic and religious policy of the nation. In this struggle of Coronets against Kirk, the Reformers were borne to victory on the shoulders of the new middle classes of society whose strength and influence lay in the growing townships and in particular within the Capital. According to Hume Brown

"The increased importance of the towns was notably shown in the closing struggle which decided the fate of the Reformation in Scotland. When Maitland of Lethington organised the Queen's Party for the restoration of Mary, he had three-fourths of the Scottish nobles at his back, and at an earlier period this would have decided the contest. But the party of the King, supported by all the chief burghs, were, even without the support of England, more than able to hold their own against the whole array of the powerful nobles. In an oft-quoted passage, Killigrew, the English resident in Scotland, writing in 1572, thus describes the change that had taken place in the country: 'Methinks,' he writes, 'I see the noblemen's great credit decay in this country, and the barons, burghs, and such like take more upon them.'"²

¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series (Elizabeth)*, 1569-71.

² *Scotland in the Time of Queen Mary*—Hume Brown, p. 184.

With Knox now safely lodged at St. Andrews, Craig who had remained in Edinburgh felt more free to speak his mind. He had loyally supported Knox at the conference, and was to remain firm in the convictions he had freely expressed there, but that he was far from satisfied with the stubbornness of the Queen's Party and of his own, was soon to become evident. What course he ought to take, must have been Craig's chief concern during the days immediately following the conference, and by the end of that week his mind was made up. Knox's health was fast failing since his apoplectic stroke of the previous autumn, and Craig seems to have felt that the time was ripe to give a fresh lead to the Church and Nation. On the 13th May, Craig preached in St. Giles' from Psalm 130: "Out of the depth have I cried unto Thee, O Lord . . ." From his use of this whole psalm, it is obvious that he believed the belligerents of both sides guilty of wrong-doing, and equally in need of the Divine pardon—"But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared . . ." (The Bishop of Galloway, Craig's colleague at this time, preached a remarkable sermon along similar lines, some weeks later.)¹ In the course of the sermon, Craig made comparison of the state of Kirk in Edinburgh with that of the Jews sometimes oppressed by the Egyptians, sometimes by the Assyrians. He made bold to say that when wicked parties contend and strive because of their pride, ambition and worldly honour, the Kirk of God is always in trouble. He regretted that there was no neutral man—did he conceive himself in this role?—to mediate between the parties at war. He contended that even if an early settlement was forthcoming, whoever won would only achieve a Pyrrhic victory. "The country shall be brought to ruin," he said. "But some say," concluded Craig, "happy is that country wherein murderers, traitors and bloodthirsty men . . . are punished, and so the country freed from all trouble." Knox soon heard of Craig's unorthodox opinions, nor was he pleased; for Bannatyne records that "by these words he (Craig) offended many, because he made the cause of both parties alike."² Be that as it may, Craig was to remain neutral throughout the rest of the conflict, a novel role for a sixteenth century Church leader. Principal Story has this to say of Craig's stand:

"As is often the case with those who look beyond the interests of jealous factions and walk by a higher rule than that of worldly policy or sectarian self-assertion, Craig failed to influence or satisfy either party; and most of his orthodox hearers were indignant at his suggesting that they in St. Giles' were blameworthy as well as the Queen's men in the castle."³

¹ *Maitland of Lethington*—Russell, p. 449 *et seq.*

² *Calderwood*, Vol. III, p. 76 *et seq.* ³ *John Craig, D.D.*—Story, p. 50.

Craig had chosen no easy path for himself. Kirkcaldy had turned St. Giles' into a fortress where

"The vault was holed in all parts so that none could come therein without being seen of them that are above, neither can any enter or be in the kirk but they may be shot from above."¹

Wodrow defends Craig's attitude at this time:

"It is an easy matter," he says, "to censure a man's conduct in such a juncture as then existed. The town was fortified against the Regent. One Parliament was held in the Canongate for the Kirk; and another in the town for the King's mother. The town was under the power of the castle, which was kept by the Queen's friends. It therefore behoved Mr. Craig to be cautious of what he spake, and to level at what he thought wrong on both hands. His peaceful temper, in wishing the breach to be made up, ought not to have been blamed."²

It was judged by the victorious Kirk, and harshly.

During the summer of 1571, Craig was joined in the ministry at St. Giles' by the Bishop of Galloway who, although not popular with the congregation, existed on friendly terms with the other. On 12th June, the Queen's men by proclamation called upon the citizens of Edinburgh to acknowledge "Queen Mary as sovereign and no other." Galloway and Craig were commanded, as the City's ministers, to pray for the Queen during church services; Craig being directed to assemble the congregation and read the missive ordering this to be done. It was read in church, but not obeyed by him. As a result, he was forbidden by Sir James Balfour and the bishop, who had himself obeyed the order, to preach. The Diurnal has it that:

"It is also to be noticed, that the ministers of Edinburgh made neither prayers nor preaching from the 12th day of June (1571) unto the (here a blank) because it was enjoined to them to pray for the Queen in the same by the lords of the nobility."³

We also learn from the same source that at a General Assembly held in Stirling around the 10th August, it was concluded that

"no minister should pray in their sermons for the Queen, and found fault with Alexander, Bishop of Galloway, minister at Edinburgh, because he prayed for the said Queen, against which act John Craig was opposed."⁴

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 117.

² *Wodrow Selections*—Lippe, p. 13.

³ *Diurnal*, p. 224.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 236.

Bannatyne mentions a letter addressed at this time by Galloway and Craig to the Secret Council in the castle. It deals mainly with stipend matters, and Queen Mary is referred to as "our sovereign lady." The ministers' request was granted, and a Council order confirming this was signed by the Earl of Huntly.¹ It is not hard to understand why Craig during these months gravely offended many of the Reformers, and Knox in particular. Yet Craig was by no means the tool of the Queen's Party. It was inevitable that there should be comings and goings between them and him, but there is evidence which shows that he maintained his neutral position. We learn that during November, 1571,

"the nobility in Edinburgh made great labour to have John Craig, minister, to preach (this surely means, as their preacher), but he would not come."²

They could hear him preach when they chose, so this refusal of his means that all their efforts to gain his support were in vain.

During the closing months of Craig's ministry at St. Giles', civic and business life within the besieged Capital had practically come to a standstill. As evidence of the chaotic state of affairs in Edinburgh during this time, there exist no Town Council Records for 1572. When the principal citizens returned, as many of them did during 1572, they took an early opportunity of dealing with their minister John Craig. They strongly disapproved of him having remained in the City, whilst they had been forced to seek refuge elsewhere, and the upshot was that Craig had no alternative but to resign his charge.

The General Assembly met in St. Andrews on 6th March, 1572, doubtless gathering there to accommodate the ailing Knox and to have his advice. Craig was present as a member of the commission that had been directed by the Convention of Leith—Row names it a General Assembly of the Church—which had met six weeks earlier, to treat with the Regent Mar on the question of allowing bishops to function in the Reformed Kirk. Craig and others reported to the March Assembly on their conference with Mar, and some twenty members including Craig were directed to meet in Knox's house to consider further this matter.³ This must have constituted a most unpleasant problem for this committee, and for Knox in particular, for they found themselves by force of circumstances compelled to acquiesce in a form of leadership they had tacitly ignored, and about which they had differing opinions themselves. Their problem, according to Professor Henderson, was not Episcopacy, but Bishops.⁴

¹ *Bannatyne Memorials*, p. 190.

² *Diurnal*, p. 254.

³ Calderwood, Vol. III, pp. 168-210.

⁴ *Claims of the Church of Scotland*—Henderson, p. 81.

The General Assembly met again on 6th August, at Perth. Knox wrote of it as follows:

“To this Assembly the town of Edinburgh after they had come home to their houses (I mean of them that were banished and remained not in the town, nor took part with the traitors of the castle), sent their commissioners as always before they had done, at every Assembly; and because they were destitute of ministers, because Mr. John Craig and they had given each other over; for they thought that the said Mr. John Craig, who before was one of their ministers, swayed overmuch to the sword-hand. I will say no more of that man; but I pray God continue with him His Holy Spirit, and that he be not drawn aside by Lethington.”¹

Thus did the great Reformer lightly pass over what must have been a serious quarrel. Knox when he chose, was discretion itself; nor did he ever forget old friendships. He had disagreed strongly with Craig for remaining in Edinburgh, but affection for his former colleague remained.

¹ *Knox's Works*—Laing, Vol. VI, p. 622.

